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**TESTIMONY RE: RAISED BILL NO. 7111 AN ACT CONCERNING ON-LINE
LICENSE RENEWAL FOR NURSES, PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS.**

Public Health Committee

March 14, 2007

Good afternoon Senator Handley, Representative Sayers and members of the Public Health Committee.

Thank-you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Nurses' Association (CNA), the professional organization for registered nurses in Connecticut. I am Margaret Flinter, APRN, President of the Association. I have been a registered nurse and an advanced practice nurse in Connecticut for 33 years. During all the years of my education, my clinical practice, and in my role as the VP/Clinical Director of the Community Health Center, Inc., the issue of access to health care has been front and central. I am therefore very happy to represent the Connecticut Nurses' Association in providing testimony today in support of **P.B. No. 7111 AN ACT CONCERNING ON-LINE LICENSE RENEWAL FOR NURSES, PHYSICIANS, AND SURGEONS.**

The data is clear. Connecticut currently is experiencing a nursing shortage and within the next decade the shortage will reach crisis levels. In order to predict our health care workforce demands we must have accurate, timely data. We support the collection of this data through the electronic renewal of licenses process by the Department of Public Health and the utilization of the Office of Workforce Competitiveness for the ongoing analysis and distribution of the data. Beginning with nurses, physicians and surgeons is a good start.

The analysis of data must be done in a timely and efficient manner so that the data is continuously available to the health care workforce industry. This would require sustainable funding to guarantee the ability of the state to predict workforce needs.

The Governor's Budget includes \$1.17 million in the second year of the Biennial Budget for the Department of Public Health to implement an on-line web-based licensing system. We have recommended that these funds should be made available during the first year of the Biennial Budget, and the on-line system should be fully implemented for all health professions by July 1, 2008.

Our recommendations to ensure an adequate nursing and allied health workforce will require a focused and sustained effort over two or three decades. An on-line licensure renewal system is one of four recommendations that are the initial components of a long-term, sustained, comprehensive strategy to address nursing and allied health shortages in Connecticut. These recommendations follow this testimony.

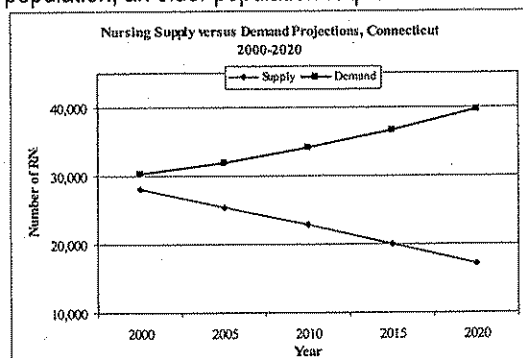
This bill supports a priority identified by Connecticut Nurses' Association with leadership from the Deans and Directors Council of the Connecticut League for Nursing, nurse executives in acute care hospitals and representatives from other nursing organizations. We urge you to support this bill and begin to build the foundation that is essential to sustained support over next decade in order to accomplish the goals identified in the attached. This is an instance in which technology is our ally in our march to progress in ensuring the health and timely health care of all residents of Connecticut

Thank you.

Recommendations to Address Nursing and Allied Health Workforce Shortages

The Connecticut Health Care Workforce Coalition urges the members of General Assembly to adopt a comprehensive, sustained, and aggressive set of strategies to address the existing and impending shortages in the nursing and allied health workforce. The Coalition recommends that the four components of a comprehensive strategy, be funded, in part, through an increase in the health care licensing fees dedicated solely for these purposes.

Background – Shortages in the nursing and allied health workforce are driven by the aging of Connecticut's population; an older population requires substantially more health care services and the projected shrinkage in



the working age population (age 20-64 years) undermines efforts to recruit nurses and allied health professionals. Furthermore, advances in medical technology contribute to an ever widening gap between health care workforce supply and demand for health care services. Health care workforce shortages lead to less access, higher costs, and lower quality. The shortages in Connecticut are projected to be among the worst in the nation. The factors contributing to nursing and allied health care workforce

shortages include a shortage of faculty, lack of awareness of allied health careers, and inadequate academic preparation for nursing and allied health training programs.

Recommendations – Ensuring an adequate nursing and allied health workforce will require a focused and sustained effort over two or three decades. **The following four recommendations are the initial components of a long-term, sustained, comprehensive strategy to address nursing and allied health shortages in Connecticut.**

- Implement a **web-based licensure renewal system** at the Department of Public Health that includes the data elements necessary to track and analyze the health care workforce in Connecticut. The Governor's Budget includes \$1.17 million in the second year of the Biennial Budget for the Department of Public Health to implement an on-line web-based licensing system. These funds should be made available during the first year of the Biennial Budget, and the on-line system should be fully implemented for all health professions by July 1, 2008.
- Address the shortage of nursing and allied health faculty by (1) implementing a nursing and allied health **faculty scholarship for service program** administered by the Department of Higher Education, in consultation with the Connecticut Allied Health Workforce Policy Board (e.g., Raised Bill No. 7102 and Proposed Bill No. 6024); (2) establish a nursing faculty student loan program to provide **loans and loan forgiveness** to state residents who pursue a master's or doctoral degree from an accredited nursing program in the state and who agree to engage in nursing instruction in an approved nursing program in the state (e.g., Proposed Bills No. 799 and 7102) and (3) provide grants to institutions of higher education for additional nursing and allied health faculty positions (e.g., Proposed Bill No. 5627). Cost: \$2.5 million per year.
- Implement a **statewide recruitment and retention campaign** to promote awareness of nursing and allied health careers, train teachers and guidance counselors, inform parents and students, particularly minority students, on career opportunities and the educational requirements for allied health programs, and increase student retention in nursing and allied health programs. This campaign should be coordinated by the Allied Health Workforce Policy Board and should build on the existing programs, including AHEC, the Nursing Career Center, One Stop Career Centers, and the state's secondary and post-secondary institutions (e.g., Raised Bill No. 7102). Cost: \$1.5 million per year.
- Appropriate sufficient funds to provide **fulltime staffing for the Allied Health Workforce Policy Board**, including a director, two analysts, and administrative support. In order to fully understanding the nature and causes of shortages and to develop and support the comprehensive and long-term set of initiatives that are necessary to address shortages, the Policy Board must have dedicated staff with sufficient analytic and policy expertise equal to the challenges it faces. The Policy Board should also serve to coordinate the collaborative contributions of the many stakeholders with an interest in resolving nursing and allied health workforce shortages. Cost: \$500,000 per year

Funding – Partial funding for initiatives to address nursing and allied health workforce shortages should come from a \$10 per person increase in the licensing fee charged to health professionals. The increase in licensing fees should be used fully and exclusively for addressing workforce shortages. Revenue: \$1.4 million per year.